COMMANDERS DIGEST

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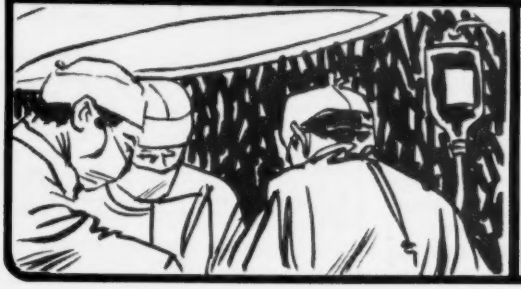

PART 2

VETERANS' BENEFITS

From 1636 To 1973

Veterans Benefits Grew With America

Since July 21, 1930, when the Veterans Administration was established, the United States has developed the most comprehensive system of assistance and care for veterans of any nation in the world.

Today, the Veterans Administration is the largest of all independent federal agencies. It is headed by an Administrator who is appointed by, and reports directly to, the President.

Colonial Benefits

The first colonial law providing benefits was passed in 1636 by the Plymouth Colony and covered the men who were at that time fighting the Pequot Indians. The law provided that "if any man shalbee sent forth as a souldier and shall return maimed, hee shalbee maintained competently by the collonie during his life."

Other colonies followed the lead of the Plymouth Colony, and in 1776 the Continental Congress sought to encourage enlistments during the Revolutionary War by providing pensions for men who were disabled while serving in the Armed Forces. When the Civil War began in 1861, Congress authorized pension benefits for Federal volunteers on the same basis as those already provided for the regular Army, and in 1862 passed the "general law" pension system for all who were disabled in the line of duty, as well as for widows and other dependent relatives of those who died while performing military duty.

Medical Care

While early veteran legislation placed emphasis on pensions, the Congress recognized that medical care was also necessary in some cases. In 1811 the U.S. Naval Home in Philadelphia was designated as a "permanent home for disabled and decrepit officers, seamen, and mariners." Some 30 years later, a separate hospital building was authorized, and in 1851 a home for disabled and invalid soldiers was authorized to be built in Washington, D.C.

By the end of the Civil War, the number of disabled veterans had become so great that the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers was set up with individual branches throughout the country. These homes were in addition to the "homes" that the various States maintained for veterans within their areas.

With America's entry into World War I, Congress set up a new system of veterans' benefits which included disability compensation, insurance, a family allotment program for Servicemen, and vocational rehabilitation for the disabled.

By then, several agencies were involved in administering the various benefits.

Recognizing this, Congress authorized the establishment of the Veterans Administration in 1930 to "consolidate and coordinate government activities affecting war veterans."

A New System

The consolidation of the various activities worked well until the entry of the United States into World War II. Then it quickly became apparent that a gigantic expansion of VA facilities would be necessary to handle the benefits for the now 19 million potential veteran-beneficiaries.

In 1944 the Congress passed legislation which many feel has had more impact on the American way of life than any other law—the World War II GI Bill. For the millions of veterans who took advantage of the Bill's provisions, the law meant a chance to complete high school or college, buy a home, and settle down. The impact on the Nation can be felt by the fact that the $14.5 billion investment in education over a quarter of a century has more than been paid back, not only in the contributions made by a better educated populace, but by the extra income tax paid by veterans who increased their earning capacity.

Under the original World War II GI Bill, some 7.8 million veterans took part in one or more training programs, and the VA guaranteed about 5.6 million home loans to veterans of that conflict.

In the 1950s, when the United States took up arms against communist aggression in Korea, the Congress passed the Korean Conflict GI Bill. Some 2.4 million veterans took advantage of training under that law, and about 1.5 million home loans were guaranteed under the program.

Vietnam-Era Veterans

In March 1966 the Congress passed the Post-Korean Conflict GI Bill for veterans who served after January 31, 1955.

Up to June 30, 1972, over 3.3 million persons have trained under its provisions and some 900,000 more used its benefits during 1972. In addition, almost 1.4 million veterans took advantage of the guaranteed loan program to purchase homes.

It was in the late sixties that the VA made a significant change in its earlier philosophy of waiting for the veteran to come in and ask about benefits. Under the "outreach" concept implemented then, Veterans Administration counselors actively sought out men and women who had left the Armed Forces to inform them about the many advantages of their benefits.

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Hospital, Outpatient Care Benefits Explained

While career members of the Armed Forces are entitled to care in Uniformed Services medical facilities after retirement on a space available basis, they also share in the Veterans Administration hospitalization and outpatient care programs. This can be a valuable benefit, should illness occur in an area where a military facility is not nearby but one of the VA's 168 hospitals is.

Admission priorities have been set up by the VA to cover the Nation's more than 29 million veterans.

Top priority is given to veterans needing treatment for injuries or diseases incurred or aggravated in line of duty in active service or who were discharged or retired for a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty.

Next are veterans with Service-connected disabilities who need treatment for an ailment not connected with their service or who are receiving or entitled to receive VA compensation payments.

Veterans with service in any war or service after January 31, 1955, veterans with peacetime service who were awarded the Medal of Honor, and veterans who are 65 years of age or older who were not discharged or retired for disability and who apply for treatment of a non-Service-connected disability, may be admitted if—

- Hospitalization is deemed necessary;
- Unless 65 years of age or older or in receipt of a VA pension, they state under oath that they are unable financially to defray the cost of the necessary hospital charges in another hospital; and
- Beds are available.

Outpatient Treatment

Outpatient medical treatment at VA hospitals is authorized for men and women who have been retired or discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and who are in need of treatment for a disability incurred or aggravated in their service. War veterans with total and permanent Service-connected disabilities and those receiving aid and attendance or housebound allowances are also entitled to this treatment. Disabled veterans training under the Vocational Rehabilitation Act may be entitled to treatment under certain circumstances. The decision as to need for outpatient treatment is made by the medical staff of the VA stations.

VETERANS of three wars await opening ceremonies at the Veterans Administration Hospital in San Diego. The hospital is one of three that was opened during 1972 to provide medical care. (VA Photo)

Outpatient dental treatment is available to all veterans. Those with dental conditions or disabilities which are Service-connected and compensable may apply at any time.

Veterans with Service-connected noncompensable dental conditions resulting from combat wounds or Service injuries, or former prisoners of war with Service-connected noncompensable dental conditions, or those whose non-Service-connected dental conditions are found by the VA to be directly related to, or aggravating, a Service-connected condition, may also apply at any time for dental treatment.

Veterans with dental conditions that are Service-connected but not compensable and which are shown to have been in existence at the time of discharge or release from active service must apply within one year after discharge or release. They are entitled to a one-time complete episode of dental treatment.

The Veterans Administration also has programs which provide domiciliary care for certain eligible veterans, which furnish prosthetic appliances for veterans who meet the basic requirements for outpatient medical care or are receiving hospital or domiciliary care, and which aid those veterans with active military service who are blind and who are entitled to receive compensation from the VA for any Service-connected condition. In this program, electronic and mechanical aids may be furnished and guide dogs provided.

Drug Abuse Treatment

All veterans who were discharged or released from military service under honorable or general conditions are eligible for hospitalization in any VA hospital for drug abuse treatment. In addition, there are 44 VA drug dependence treatment facilities for inpatient and outpatient care following hospitalization in cities across the United States.

VA Operates

A valuable benefit for both career Servicemen and eligible veterans is the Nation's Veterans Administration (VA) hospital system.

Top admission priority at the VA hospitals is extended to—but not restricted to—veterans needing treatment for injuries or diseases incurred or aggravated in line of duty in active service or who have been discharged or retired for a disability incurred or aggravated in line of duty.

Virtually every branch of medicine and dentistry are provided by the VA, depending on each individual patient's needs and eligibility, including orthopedics, orthodontics, physical therapy and psychiatry, to name just a few.

Outpatient medical treatment at VA hospitals is authorized for men and women who have been discharged or retired under conditions other than dishonorable and who are in need of treatment for a disability incurred or aggravated in their service. VA also provides domiciliary care for certain eligible veterans.

Photos courtesy of Veterans Administration Information Service

HOSPITAL CARE—Junior Volunteer Mariko Yoshida (top left photo) escorts Vietnam veteran Danny G. Adams for an examination at the Seattle, Washington, VA Hospital. At the Wadsworth VA Hospital in Los Angeles (bottom left photo), Nurse Mabel I. Palmer adjusts orthopedic weights for John W. Englehart, a Vietnam-veteran patient.

es 168 Hospitals in U.S.

MANY KINDS OF SERVICES—At the Minneapolis VA Hospital (top right photo), Staff Dentist Dr. William Hope (left), assisted by Miss Kathie Underhill, dental assistant, treats patient Phillip Halverson, Bilateral amputee. Carol Ann Ross (lower right photo), Prosthetics Research and Education Specialist at the New York City VA Prosthetics Center, helps evaluate a powered wheelchair with an unidentified factory representative. At the Allen Park, Michigan, VA Hospital (lower center photo), 21-year old Elvin King, Vietnam veteran amputee, is taught to use his artificial leg by Corrective Therapy Assistant Donald Hutchinson.

VA Programs Protect Wives, Children

Many of the benefits under the Veterans Administration's program are for the families of Servicemen and women who die on active duty as well as for survivors of veterans of the Armed Forces.

The largest programs are the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and the Non-Service-Connected Death Pension.

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC): Payments under this program are provided for widows, widowers, unmarried children under 18 (as well as certain helpless children and those between 18 and 23, if attending a VA-approved school), and certain parents of Service members and veterans who die from:

- A disease or injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty while on active duty or active duty for training, or
- An injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty while on inactive duty training, or
- A disability otherwise compensable under laws administered by the Veterans Administration.

There are additional payments for children and parents. Full information on this part of the DIC program may be obtained at any VA office.

Non-Service-Connected Death Pension: Widowers, widows, and children of veterans who die of non-Service-connected causes may be eligible for a pension payable by the Veterans Administration. Among the qualifying conditions are:

- The veteran must have served at least 90 days during a wartime period, unless discharged or retired sooner for a Service-connected disability, and must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.
- Generally, to qualify, the spouse must have been married to the veteran for at least one year prior to his or her death, unless a child resulted from the union. A widow or widower of a Vietnam Era veteran is eligible regardless of the duration of the marriage. In determining eligibility, the VA takes into account the estate left by the veteran; a pension is not payable if the estate is so large that it is reasonable to believe that it can maintain the dependents of the veteran. Income is also a factor, with the pension rates ranging from $87 to a widow or widower alone whose annual income was not more than $300 (the monthly pension would be $104 for survivor and one child, with $17 paid for each additional child) to $17 for a survivor whose annual income is $2,600 ($72 monthly for a widow or widower and 1 child).

Full information on the Veterans Administration pension program may be obtained from the nearest VA office.

DIC Widow/Widower Rates

Pay Grade	Monthly Rate	Pay Grade	Monthly Rate
E-1	$184	W-4	$262
E-2	$189	O-1	$232
E-3	$195	O-2	$240
E-4	$206	O-3	$257
E-5	$212	O-4	$272
E-6	$217	O-5	$299
E-7	$227	O-6	$337
E-8	$240	O-7	$365
E-9	$251*	O-8	$399
W-1	$232	O-9	$429
W-2	$241	O-10	$469**
W-3	$249		

*** Rate will be $270 if the individual served as Sergeant Major of the Army, Senior Enlisted Advisor of the Navy, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, or Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps at the time designated by section 402 of Title 38 U.S.C.**

**** Rate will be $503 if the individual served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Naval Operations, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, or Commandant of the Marine Corps, at the time designated by section 402 of Title 38 U.S.C.**

Additional Benefits

For members of families of veterans, there are other benefits. Among them are—

- **Reimbursement of Burial Expenses:** The VA pays $250 toward a veteran's burial expenses. The veteran must have

been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and have been either a wartime or Korean Conflict or Vietnam veteran or a peacetime veteran receiving Service-connected compensation.

- **Burial in National Cemeteries:** Eligible veterans and certain members of their families may be buried in national cemeteries having available grave space. This program is administered by the U.S. Army Memorial Affairs Agency, Washington, D.C. 20315, and application should be made to the Superintendent of the nearest National Cemetery.
- **Headstone or Grave Marker:** A headstone or grave marker is supplied for veterans by the U.S. Army Memorial Affairs Agency, Washington, D.C. 20315, upon application by the veteran's survivors.
- **Burial Flag:** An American flag may be issued to drape the casket of an eligible veteran. The deceased veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and must have been either a wartime veteran or one who served after June 26, 1950, or a veteran who served at least one enlistment during peacetime, unless discharged or released sooner for disability incurred in line of duty. The VA may also issue a flag for a veteran who is missing in action and is later presumed dead. After the funeral service, the flag may be given to the next of kin or close friend or associate of the deceased. Flags are issued at any VA office and most local post offices.

Service-Connected Disability

Any veteran who has been disabled by injury or disease incurred because of military service—either in wartime or peacetime—and separated with an honorable or general discharge is eligible for compensation payments from the Veterans Administration.

Monthly payments may be made to those veterans found eligible because of disabilities incurred during wartime. They range, as shown below, from $28 to $495 a month—

Compensation for Service-Connected Disability

10 percent	$ 28
20 percent	$ 51
30 percent	$ 77
40 percent	$106
50 percent	$149
60 percent	$179
70 percent	$212
80 percent	$245
90 percent	$275
Total disability	$495

In addition, specific rates, up to $1,232 per month, are paid when the eligible veteran is adjudged to have suffered certain severe disabilities.

Compensation at 80 percent of the wartime rates is paid for disabilities incurred under non-extra-hazardous conditions during peacetime. These payments will continue at that rate until June 30, 1973, at which time the wartime rate will be paid in all cases.

For veterans whose Service-connected disabilities are rated at 50 percent or more, there are additional allowances for dependents.

NEW SKILLS—Veteran James A. Moore learns new writing skills at the Lincoln, Nebraska, VA Hospital Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service facility. (VA Photo)

VA Also Covers Non-Service Disability

One of the many benefits paid by the Veterans Administration is a pension payable to men and women who served for 90 days or more during a wartime period and who become permanently and totally disabled from reasons not traceable to military service. In the VA pension program, veterans 65 years of age or older are considered fully eligible for this pension payment.

The amount of income that the veteran receives will be used by the Veterans Administration to determine the amount of pension paid, but no pensions are paid to a single veteran receiving $2,600 or more in income or to a veteran (with dependents) who has an income above $3,800. In addition, the size of the veteran's estate will also be used by the VA in determining the pension entitlement.

Monthly pension rates run from $22 to $130 for an eligible single veteran, $33 to $140 for a veteran with one dependent, $38 to $145 for a veteran with two dependents, and $43 to $150 for a veteran with three or more dependents. Full details on the VA pension program may be obtained from any Veterans Administration office.

FREE PAMPHLETS

The following publications of the Veterans Administration are available in single copies from the nearest VA office:

- **VA IS-1 Fact Sheet "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents"**
- **VA Pamphlet 26-6 "To The Home-Buying Veteran"**
- **VA Pamphlet 26-72-1 "Minority Veterans Home Counseling"**

For Disabled Vets

Vocational Training Programs Outlined

For disabled veterans who served in the Armed Forces during any of the four periods listed below, a vocational rehabilitation program of the VA is available, if all three of the following conditions are met:

- They suffered a Service-connected disability in active service which entitles them to compensation, or would do so but for the receipt of retirement pay;
- They were discharged or released under other than dishonorable conditions; and
- The VA determines that they need vocational rehabilitation to overcome the handicaps of their disabilities.

Veterans whose disabilities were incurred in periods II and IV, described below, and whose disability ratings are less than 30 percent must show clearly that they have a definite employment handicap resulting from a Service-connected disability.

The periods of service are—

I-World War II Period: Training for veterans of this period was ended on July 25, 1956, except for certain seriously disabled men and women.

II-Period From World War II To The Korean Conflict: This is the period of July 26, 1947 to June 26, 1950. Training for this group ended on October 15, 1971, except for those unable to complete training by that date. For these individuals, the date is October 15, 1975.

III-The Korean Conflict Period: Inclusive dates are June 27, 1950, to January 31, 1955. Termination date for those discharged before August 20, 1954, was August 20, 1963; for those discharged later, the date is 9 years after the date of separation.

IV-Post-Korean Conflict Service: This period covers the time between February 1, 1955, and the present. For those who were discharged prior to October 16, 1962, the basic end date was October 15, 1971; for those discharged later, the basic end date is 9 years after the date of separation.

OUTREACH—Vans carry Veterans Administration counselors on wide-ranging trips to small and large cities, acquainting eligible veterans with the many benefits available to them and their dependents. (VA Photo)

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SUBSISTENCE RATES

	No Dep.	1 Dep.	2 Deps.	Ea. Add. Dep.
Institutional				
Full-time	**$170**	**$211**	**$248**	**$18**
Three-Qtr	**$128**	**$159**	**$187**	**$14**
Half-time	**$ 85**	**$106**	**$124**	**$ 9**
On-farm, OJT or apprenticeship				
Full-time	**$148**	**$179**	**$207**	**$14**

Training Program

The type of training that a disabled veteran can take under the VA vocational rehabilitation program is determined in discussions between the veteran and a VA counselor. Eligible individuals may enroll in schools and colleges, train on-the-job, take institutional on-farm training, or enter other types of training programs to reach their goal. The training program may last up to 4 years, or its equivalent in part-time, or part-time and full-time training.

While undergoing vocational rehabilitation training, the veteran will receive—in addition to disability compensation—tuition, books and fee costs, plus monthly subsistence allowances as shown below.

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